

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ACDA-05 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 MC-02 EB-07 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SAJ-01

ERDA-05 SAM-01 /081 W

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R 211823Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4445

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 27375

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MPOL, UK, FR

SUBJECT: BOURGES/MASON MEETING

REF: (A) PARIS 26754; (B) PARIS 25859

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: LAST WEEK'S BOURGES/MASON MEETING SEEMS TO HAVE BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO THE ATMOSPHERE (IF NOT THE SUBSTANCE) OF ANGLO-FRENCH POLITICAL/MILITARY RELATIONS. THE FRENCH ARE IMPRESSED BY BRITISH DEFENSE EFFORT AND BY MASON. END SUMMARY.

2. WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH UK EMBASSY AND FRENCH MOD SOURCES RECENT VISIT BY FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER BOURGES TO HIS BRITISH COLLEAGUE, ROY MASON. ALL OUR SOURCES AGREED THAT THE VISIT WENT VERY WELL AND ESTABLISHED A POSITIVE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOURGES AND MASON. FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS FRENCH AND BRITISH DEFENSE MINISTERS HAVE NOT HAD A FORMAL MEETING IN MANY MONTHS.

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CONSEQUENTLY BOTH SIDES WERE PLEASED THAT BOURGES AND

MASON HIT IT OFF SO WELL ON THEIR FIRST ENCOUNTER. WHILE ATMOSPHERE SEEMS TO HAVE DOMINATED SUBSTANCE IN THE MEETING, HIBON (BOURGES' DIPLOMATIC ADVISER) TOLD US THAT BOURGES WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THAT THE BRITISH DEFENSE SITUATION WAS NOT "AS BADLY OFF" AS THE FRENCH HAD THOUGHT. EXPANDING ON THIS THEME, HIBON SAID THAT WHILE THE UK DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT WAS ENCOUNTERING BUDGETARY PROBLEMS, IT WAS NOT SUBJECT TO THE SAME DEBILITATING PSYCHOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL "EROSION" THAT THE FRENCH DETECTED IN SOME OTHER NATO COUNTRIES (E.G., THE NETHERLANDS). MOREOVER, BOURGES WAS IMPRESSED BY THE FORCE POSTURES OF THE ROYAL NAVY AND RAF. HIBON ADDED THAT THE FRENCH WERE PERSUADED THAT MASON WAS A "RESPONSIBLE" DEFENSE MINISTER WHO WOULD TRY TO PRESERVE A REASONABLE BRITISH DEFENSE STRUCTURE AGAINST THE ATTACKS OF THE LEFT WING OF THE LABOR PARTY.

3. OUR SOURCES SAID THAT BOURGES AND MASON DISCUSSED THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED US-UK MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU). MASON STRESSED THAT THE MOU WAS COMPATIBLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF A EUROPEAN ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY. AS HE HAD EARLIER WITH SECRETARY SCHLESINGER, BOURGES PROPOSED TO MASON THAT THE SUBJECT OF NATO STANDARDIZATION BE EXAMINED BY THE QUADRIPARTITE ARMAMENT DIRECTORS. ACCORDING TO HIBON, THE BRITISH RESPONSE WAS "AMBIGUOUS."

4. MUCH OF THE MEETING FOCUSED ON BILATERAL ARMAMENTS COOPERATION. BOURGES AND MASON AGREED THAT FRANCO-BRITISH COOPERATION (PARTICULARLY MISSILES, HELICOPTERS AND COMBAT AIRCRAFT) SHOULD CONTINUE AND EXPAND. THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF THE FRENCH-UK MOU DEALING WITH THEIR TRADE IN MILITARY EQUIPMENT. THE FACT THAT TRADE COVERED BY THE MOU IS MORE THAN 60 PERCENT IN FAVOR OF

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 27375

FRANCE DID NOT SEEM TO POSE A SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR THE MEETING.

5. OUR BRITISH SOURCES TOLD US THAT, AS FAR AS THEY KNOW, QUESTIONS CONCERNING FRENCH AND BRITISH STRATEGIC NUCLEAR FORCES, PARTICULARLY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF POSSIBLE ANGLO-FRENCH NUCLEAR COOPERATION, WERE NOT DISCUSSED IN THE COURSE OF THE MEETING. HIBON TOLD US THAT BRITISH MADE NO ATTEMPT TO BRING FRANCE INTO MBFR.

6. COMMENT: THE POLITICAL/MILITARY DIALOGUE BETWEEN FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN WAS PARTICULARLY ACTIVE DURING THE POMPIDOU/HEATH DAYS, REFLECTING THE GENERALLY WARM CLIMATE OF ANGLO-FRENCH RELATIONS OF THAT PERIOD. WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT IN LONDON, THIS DIALOGUE TENDED TO LAPSE. EFFORTS TO INSTILL NEW LIFE IN IT WERE HAMPERED BY THE SHORT TENURE OF SOUFFLET AS  
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GISCARD'S FIRST MOD, AND BY SCHEDULING PROBLEMS WHICH KEPT MASON AND BOURGES APART UNTIL LAST WEEK. THE FRENCH NOW SEEM ANXIOUS TO CULTIVATE THE BRITISH CONNECTION -- PERHAPS IN PART AS A COUNTER-WEIGHT TO THEIR PERCEPTION OF THE GROWING MILITARY STATURE OF THE FRG. IN ANY EVENT, THE ATMOSPHERE IN PARIS AFTER THE BOURGES/MASON MEETING SUGGESTS THAT WE WILL SEE MORE ACTIVITY BETWEEN LONDON AND PARIS ON THINGS POLITICAL/MILITARY.  
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